Course Report 2015

Subject	French
Level	National 5

The statistics used in this report have been compiled before the completion of any Post Results Services.

This report provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers, lecturers and assessors in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding. It would be helpful to read this report in conjunction with the published assessment and marking instructions for the examination.

Section 1: Comments on the Assessment

Component 1: Question paper

Question paper 1

Reading: The reading section of the paper was composed of three texts of equal difficulty and weight (10 marks for each item). Over the whole paper, there were three supported questions (worth 4 marks) and one overall purpose question. The paper covered the contexts of Employability, Learning and Society (the three contexts not covered in the Listening paper), and the texts were based on interesting and relevant topics which engaged the candidates. Each text was accessible to all candidates but proved appropriately demanding and produced a good range of performances.

The mean mark for the reading section was 20.6 out of 30.

Writing: The Writing section of the paper required the candidates to reply by email to a job application. The paper was worth 20 marks with 4 predictable bullet points and 2 unpredictable bullet points.

The mean mark for the writing section was 14.5, an increase of 1.2 marks compared to 2014.

Question paper 2

Listening: The Listening paper had two parts: a monologue worth 8 marks, including an overall purpose question; and a dialogue worth 12 marks, including a supported question worth two marks. The paper was based on the context of Culture and related clearly to the teaching syllabus for National 5.

The mean mark for the listening section was 12.6, an increase of 2.3 marks compared to 2014.

Component 2: Performance

All the centres verified in this round used the SQA guidelines for the Internally Assessed Component of Course Assessment — National 5 performance: talking.

Overall, assessors used the pegged marks in the Marking Instructions successfully. The revised Marking Instructions with more detailed pegged marks descriptors will be published in due course and will allow for more scope when awarding marks. The revised pegged marks descriptors will also provide more detail on how to assess the Natural Element.

Section 2: Comments on candidate performance

Component 1: Question paper

Question paper 1
Reading: Overall, candidates performed well in the Reading papers, with very few candidates giving no response to a question. There were a few examples of poor expression and mis-translation, but on the whole candidates gave enough detail to get the marks available.

Writing: Candidates performed very well in this component, with most being better prepared to tackle the unpredictable bullet points. Some candidates misunderstood the meaning of 'enquiry' in bullet point 6, and this led to some addressing this final bullet point incorrectly and inaccurately.

Question paper 2
Listening: Candidate performance improved in 2015. Most candidates coped well with the monologue, with most getting the overall purpose question. Candidates still found the dialogue to be slightly more demanding than the monologue with many not giving enough detail to access all the marks available.

General
Centres should be very encouraged by the improved performance of candidates this year. It was clear that the majority of candidates had been presented at the correct level with 89.9 % of candidates achieving grade A–C, an increase of 3.1% compared to 2014.

Component 2: Performance
Candidates in the Verification Sample coped relatively well with the prepared Presentation, with a large majority achieving between 6 out of 10 and 10 out of 10. Some candidates seem to struggle with the complexity of the language of the topic they had chosen. Poor pronunciation was an issue in many performances. Weaker performances lacked the required detailed language, structure and variety expected at this level.

Candidates did not cope as well with the less predictable Conversation. The majority of the candidates in the sample achieved between 9 out of 15 and 12 out of 15. A number of candidates could only cope with seemingly rehearsed conversations.

In both the Presentation and Conversation, candidates who made lists of items (eg school subjects), did not perform as well.

Many candidates performed very well in the Natural Element.

In some cases, candidates performed at a standard beyond National 5.

Section 3: Areas in which candidates performed well

Component 1: Question paper

Question paper 1

Reading

Item 1 – Context Learning: Overall, candidates coped well with the majority of the questions in this first text and were able to give enough detail to get the marks.

♦ Question 1(a) – this question was answered particularly well, with most candidates getting full marks.
♦ Questions 1(c) + (d) – these questions were also answered particularly well, with most candidates picking out the information required to get full marks.

Item 2 – Context Learning: Candidates performed very well with the questions in this second text.

♦ Question 2 (a) – this was a supported question and most candidates answered this correctly.
♦ Question 2 (b) and (e) – the majority of candidates answered these two questions with enough detail to obtain the marks available.
♦ Question 2 (f) – this was the overall purpose question and nearly all candidates were able to get the correct answer.

Item 3 – Context Society: Again candidates coped well with most of the questions in this third text.

♦ Question 3 (a) – this question was a supported question and most candidates were able to pick out the correct information to complete the sentence correctly.
♦ Question 3(c) – most candidates were able to write enough detail and pick out the two pieces of information required to get the 2 marks.

Writing

Many candidates addressed the four predictable bullet points in a balanced manner and were able to use detailed vocabulary and grammatical structures. As this was the second year of National 5, candidates were more prepared for the two unpredictable bullet points and the majority of candidates did address these. It was encouraging to see many candidates referring directly to the job being advertised rather than just a generic job application.

Question Paper 2

Listening: Monologue
- Question 1(c): Most candidates were able to pick out the two pieces of information required to get the 2 marks.
- Question 1(d): Most candidates were able to pick out two of the three pieces of information required for the two marks. 'Meet with the actors' and 'make (new) friends' were the two most popular answers given.
- Question 1(e): Nearly all the candidates answered the overall purpose question correctly.

Listening: Dialogue
- Question 2(a): Most candidates were able to pick out one of the pieces of information given to get the mark available. Many candidates did in fact give both pieces of information 'her birthday' and 'she is on holiday'
- Question 2(b): this question was a supported question and most candidates ticked the two correct boxes to get the full marks available.
- Question 2(d): Most candidates were able to pick out two of the three pieces of information required for the 2 marks. 'Too long' and 'not enough action/ are boring,' were the most popular answers given.

Component 2: Performance

Candidates performed very well in the Presentation which is prepared ahead of the assessment. Better performances had evidence of clearer pronunciation and intonation in the delivery.

In the Conversation, candidates who were able to respond to less rehearsed questions performed better in the Natural Element.

In both the Presentation and the Conversation, candidates who selected topics that allowed them to use detailed language throughout, performed well.

In the Conversation candidates performed better when the interlocutor used more open-ended questions.

Section 4: Areas which candidates found demanding

Component 1: Question paper

Reading

♦ Question 1 (b): Many candidates had difficulty with this question and misunderstood *une copine de ma mère* translating it as 'a friend's mum', and many thought that *appelé* meant 'applied' or 'appealed'.

♦ Question 1(e): Some candidates did not give enough detail to get the full three marks and omitted 'elderly people' for the first mark available.

♦ Question 3(b ii): Some candidates did not give enough detail to get the mark by failing to mention the idea of 'flaws/defects'.

♦ Question 3 (e): Some candidates had difficulty understanding the concept of *ce qui reste* and therefore did not give enough or sufficiently accurate detail to get this final point.

Writing

Most candidates did address bullet points 5 and 6 (the unpredictable ones). Most candidates did seem to cope well with bullet point 5. However, many candidates did not understand the word 'enquiry' in English and therefore were unable to address this bullet point correctly or accurately.

Many candidates were still unable to form an accurate question or they asked a question that had been learned but had no reference to what there is to do in the area.

Listening: Monologue

♦ Question 1(e): Many candidates had difficulty with this question. *Histoire* meaning 'story' in this context was mistranslated by many as 'history'. Although this was not part of the answer, many candidates heard this word and therefore thought the film was about the 'history of Spain / France'. Very few candidates managed to pick out the correct information about 'starting a new career (in Spain)'

Listening: Dialogue

♦ Question 2 (f): Some candidates had difficulty picking out two of the three pieces information required to get full marks for this question. Many candidates misunderstood the words *publicités* and *jeux* and there was a lot of poor expression from candidates making this question particularly challenging to mark.

♦ Question 2 (g): Many candidates had difficulty picking out the second piece of information required to get full marks for this question. Very few understood *allemand* and were therefore not able to give the correct answer for the second mark.

Component 2: Performance

Some candidates found the Conversation more demanding. Sometimes interlocutors used closed questions, which did not always allow candidates to expand on their answers or to use detailed language. Candidates often responded with short answers without the detailed language expected at this level.

Section 5: Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Component 1: Question paper

Question paper 1

Reading: Candidates should be guided by the number of marks awarded for each question and should give as much detail in their answer as they have understood. Although the extraneous rule no longer applies at National 5, candidates **should be discouraged from giving extra information** as this could negate any correct information and therefore be penalised.

Centres should ensure that candidates have a sound knowledge of verb conjugation, adjective endings, and the comparative, as this will minimise mistranslation if using a dictionary for comprehension. Candidates should also be reminded to use the dictionary carefully and not always choose the first word given.

Candidates should be encouraged to read each question carefully and underline the key word or words in the question which will lead them to the answer in the text. Candidates should also be encouraged to read their own answers carefully to ensure it makes sense in English.

Writing: Centres and candidates should be encouraged by the improved performance of candidates in the writing paper this year.

As the Writing is in the form of an e-mail, there is now no requirement for candidates to use the formal beginning and endings as was required at Intermediate 2.

Centres should ensure that candidates read the information carefully regarding the job for which they are applying, Candidates should be made aware that it is good practice to:

♦ Check they have addressed all 6 bullet points.
♦ Use the dictionary to check the accuracy of what they have already written (spelling, accents, genders etc) and **not** for the creation of new sentences.
♦ **Ask questions** regarding the job as this could be one of the unpredictable bullet points.
♦ Leave time to read through their piece of writing to ensure all bullets have been covered and avoidable mistakes have not been made eg spelling, adjective endings, accents, words missed out.

♦ Be aware of the criteria to be used in assessing performances in Writing, so that they are aware of what is required in terms of content, accuracy and range and variety of language to achieve the good and very good categories.

Question paper 2

Listening

Centres and candidates should be encouraged by the improved performance of candidates in the Listening paper this year.

In responding to the questions in the Listening paper, candidates should be guided by the number of marks awarded for each question and should give as much detail in their answer as they have understood. Although the extraneous rule no longer applies at National 5 candidates **should be discouraged from giving extra information** as this could negate any correct information and therefore be penalised.

Centres should ensure that candidates are able to give **accurate** answers through confident knowledge of numbers, common adjectives, nationalities, school subjects, weather expressions, days of the week and question words, so that some of the 'easier' points of information are not lost through lack of sufficiently accurate details.

Candidates should be encouraged to read all the questions carefully and underline key words to listen out for so they can pick out the information required more easily. More practice on note-taking would also help candidates improve their listening skills.

Candidates hear both the monologue and dialogue 3 times and should be encouraged to make use of the third listening to check the accuracy and specific details of their answers.

Component 2: Performance

Candidates must use detailed language at National 5 in most parts of the performance. At these levels, long lists of more than two or three items (eg places in town, school subjects) or repetitions of straightforward descriptions (eg hair and eyes) are unlikely to allow candidates to use a suitable range of structures and vocabulary.

In the Presentation, some candidates seem to struggle with the complexity of the language of the topic they had chosen. Centres should provide advice to candidates as to what level of language they should be able to cope with and should ensure comprehension of their Presentation before learning it.

Interlocutors should try and avoid asking closed questions, especially for more able candidates. Questions such as *qu'est-ce que tu préfères, la physique ou la biologie?* are likely to invite very short answers and prevent candidates from demonstrating their full ability. Alternatively, these questions could be immediately followed by *Pourquoi?* to elicit fuller answers.

For the most part, interlocutors were supportive of candidates, especially with nervous candidates. Where interlocutors were aware of candidates' interests, this helped more natural/spontaneous conversations.

Centres are advised to refer to the information regarding the recommended length of time the Presentation and the Conversation should last, so that candidates are able to demonstrate their ability to meet the demands of National 5 as provided in the document *Modern Languages Performance: talking, General assessment information*.

The majority of centres asked questions in the Conversation, which followed on naturally from the Presentation topic chosen by candidates as recommended in the *National 5 Modern Languages performance: talking assessment task* document. Many assessors went on to refer to other contexts, which allowed for personalisation and choice. Naturally moving on to other contexts or topics also allows the candidates to demonstrate a variety of language. On occasions, where candidates were asked questions about the same topic/context as in their Presentation, candidates were limited to repeating parts of their Presentation in their answers. Centres should therefore try to avoid asking questions about items that candidates have already addressed in the Presentation.

Centres should ensure that questions are chosen so that the conversation flows naturally and gives further opportunity for personalisation and choice.

Some centres were overly prescriptive in preparing candidates for the conversation. Conversations should be as spontaneous as possible for the level assessed. Some conversations sounded excessively rehearsed. It is recommended that interlocutors ask a range of questions adapted to the responses from, and the ability of, each candidate, rather than asking the same questions to the whole cohort. A wider variety of questions in the conversation can aid candidates to develop strategies to cope with the unexpected (in line with Appendix 1 of the *Modern Languages performance: talking, General assessment information* which is available from the CfE section of the SQA website).

Following on from a lesson on a particular topic, an example of sensible preparation towards the Conversation could be to invite candidates to think about the type of questions the interlocutor is likely to ask them about this topic. They then could think about the key words in French that would be in those questions (eg question words). Candidates could then review the vocabulary studied in the lesson and try and answer those questions. Candidates should also be aware that questions in French can be asked in a variety of ways, hence the importance of identifying key words. The teacher/lecturer could help candidates practise understanding questions orally by requiring them to identify key words in a list of random questions he/she speaks out to the class. During the assessment, the interlocutor could use some of these questions, possibly rephrasing them, and also some unrehearsed questions on this topic as part of a more natural conversation at this level. However, candidates must not know the exact questions and/or their order in advance. This would be detrimental to the natural element of the Conversation.

Pronunciation was the main issue for many of the candidates who did not perform well. Verifiers — sympathetic (native or non-native) speakers of French — must be able to understand candidates, no matter how good the content of their Presentation/Conversation is. It was felt that, on occasions, assessors had been lenient regarding pronunciation,

possibly because they already had an inclination as to what candidates were going to say. Having a sample listened to by a third party could help identify issues with pronunciation.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2014	9444

Number of resulted entries in 2015	10551

Statistical information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of Course awards	%	Cum. %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark - 100				
A	56.4%	56.4%	5951	71
B	19.2%	75.6%	2023	61
C	14.0%	89.6%	1478	51
D	4.2%	93.7%	438	46
No award	6.3%	-	661	-

For this Course the intention was to set an assessment with the Grade Boundaries at the notional values of 50% for a Grade C and 70% for a Grade A. Whilst the adjustment for Listening made in 2014 no longer applied, the Course proved slightly easier than intended and the grade boundaries were increased to 71 for an A and 51 for a C to reflect this.